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Creating large-scale, regular arrays of nanoscale components is now almost as easy as blowing bubbles. Harvard University chemist Charles Lieber and his collaborators suspended nanocomponents in a liquid polymer and then blew bubbles from the liquid. As a bubble inflated and solidified, the nanocomponents in its polymer skin lined up with each other and took on even spacing. The researchers have demonstrated the technique with silicon nanorods and carbon nanotubes, they report in the June Nature Nanotechnology. The photo above shows sections of a 50-centimeter-high bubble being attached to two vertical silicon wafers. Making large, mass-producible arrays of nanoscale devices has always been nanotechnology's challenge. Cheap, easy-to-make nanotech films could have many uses. For example, arrays of organic, light-emitting polymer rods could be stretched over silicon wafers to create high-resolution displays, Lieber says.

PHOTO (COLOR)

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By D. Castelvechi

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